



The Commonwealth of Massachusetts  
Executive Office of Health and Human Services  
Department of Public Health  
250 Washington Street, Boston, MA 02108-4619

MAURA T. HEALEY  
Governor  
KIMBERLEY DRISCOLL  
Lieutenant Governor

**Board of Registration in Pharmacy  
Drug Control Program  
Immunization Program**

KATHLEEN E. WALSH  
Secretary  
ROBERT GOLDSTEIN, MD, PhD  
Commissioner  
Tel: 617-624-6000  
www.mass.gov/dph

**Policy 2023-02: Vaccine Administration**

The Massachusetts Department of Public Health (“Department”), through the Board of Registration in Pharmacy (“Board”), Drug Control Program (“DCP”), and Immunization Program is making vaccines more accessible by authorizing qualified pharmacy personnel to administer certain vaccines and emergency medications as designated by the Department.

**For the purposes of this policy, pharmacy personnel are defined as licensed pharmacists, pharmacy interns, and pharmacy technicians.**

Any pharmacy intern or pharmacy technician administering vaccines pursuant to this policy must have the approval of a licensed pharmacist on duty and be under the direct supervision of a licensed, trained immunizing pharmacist.

**I. Authorized Vaccines**

- A. FDA-approved vaccines included in the latest recommended immunizations as approved by the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (“ACIP”) of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (“CDC”).

The recommended immunization schedule for adults is published here:

<https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/schedules/hcp/adult.html>

The recommended immunization schedule for persons 18 years of age and younger is published here:

<https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/schedules/hcp/imz/child-adolescent.html>

- B. Any FDA-approved, authorized, cleared, or licensed COVID-19 vaccines may be administered, but only in accordance with the FDA’s guidance and manufacturer approved labeling for the specific product.

**II. Vaccine Recipients**

Pharmacy personnel may only administer vaccines to individuals who are **5 years of age and older**, in accordance with [105 CMR 700.004\(B\)\(6\)](#).

### **III. Training and Other Requirements**

- A. Current cardiopulmonary resuscitation (“CPR”) certification is required.
- B. Proof of training and CPR certification must be kept on file in the pharmacy.
- C. **Pharmacists and pharmacy interns** must also successfully complete an American Council on Pharmaceutical Education (“ACPE”) accredited training course prior to administering vaccines.
  - 1. Minimum program requirements:
    - a. 12 contact hours of self-study modules with case studies and assessment exam;
    - b. 8 contact hours of live seminar with final exam; and
    - c. hands-on assessment of intramuscular and subcutaneous injection techniques appropriate for the patient’s age.
  - 2. The goals of training programs must:
    - a. provide comprehensive immunization education and training;
    - b. provide knowledge, skills, and resources necessary to establish and promote a successful immunization service;
    - c. include clinical evaluation of indications and contraindications;
    - d. teach how to identify at-risk patient populations needing immunizations;
    - e. teach how to administer immunizations in compliance with legal and regulatory standards;
    - f. recognize and treat vaccine reactions; and
    - g. include pre-administration education and screening, vaccine storage and handling, administration of medication, record-keeping, and reporting of adverse events.
  - 3. Pharmacists must obtain at least 1 hour of ACPE-approved, immunization-related continuing pharmacy education every year.
- D. **Pharmacy technicians** must meet the following additional requirements before administering vaccines.
  - 1. Must be licensed as a Pharmacy Technician (“PT”) and either:
    - a. be nationally certified (i.e., ExCPT or PTCB); or
    - b. have worked at least 500 hours after being licensed as a PT.
  - 2. Successfully complete an ACPE accredited 6-hour training program to include assessment exam(s) and the following minimum requirements:

- a. at least 2 hours of live training to include hands-on assessment of intramuscular and subcutaneous injection techniques appropriate for the patient's age; and
  - b. recognition and management of vaccine reactions.
3. Complete at least 2 additional hours of documented on-the-job training with an experienced certified immunizer and completion of a [Skills Checklist for Vaccine Administration](#) (or similar).
4. After the pharmacist counsels the patient and selects the vaccine, a pharmacy technician may only conduct the physical act of preparing and administering the vaccine and providing emergency medication to manage a vaccine reaction in accordance with a standing order.
5. At least 2 hours of continuing education / updated training must be completed every 2 years.

#### **IV. Requirements for Vaccine Administration**

- A. A prescription or standing order is required.
- B. A prescription or standing order is also required to administer emergency medications to manage any adverse events following vaccination.
- C. Model standing orders for vaccines and emergency medication standing orders for the treatment of adverse events following vaccination can be found here:  
<http://www.immunize.org/standing-orders/>  
<https://www.mass.gov/lists/vaccine-model-standing-orders>
- D. Federal law requires the patient or legal representative to be provided with the appropriate [Vaccine Information Statement \("VIS"\)](#).
- E. Prior to administering a vaccine other than influenza or COVID-19, the [Massachusetts Immunization Information System \("MIIS"\)](#) must be reviewed to ensure that the requested vaccine has not been administered by another provider.
- F. Prior to administering COVID-19 booster doses, it is recommended that providers confirm the prior formulation that the individual had received. This can be done by reviewing the individual's record in the pharmacy computer system, Electronic Health Record ("EHR"), MIIS, or COVID-19 vaccination card.
- G. After administration, the vaccination information must be reported to MIIS.

## **V. Free Pediatric Vaccine Availability**

- A. The Immunization Program provides routine childhood vaccines free of charge for administration to individuals through 18 years of age regardless of insurance status.
- B. In order to obtain free vaccines for administration, pharmacies must follow instructions provided here: <https://www.mass.gov/resource/vaccine-management>
- C. For more information about enrolling in this program, please contact the Vaccine Management Unit at 617-983-6828.

## **VI. Communications**

- A. Notification/record of immunization should be provided to the patient's primary care provider.
- B. If the pharmacy does not utilize free pediatric vaccines through the Immunization Program, the parents/guardians of patients under 19 years of age must be informed of the potential costs and that their primary care provider can provide vaccines at no charge.

Suggested language: "Please note: the cost of the vaccines your child will be receiving may not be covered by your health insurance, resulting in a significant out of pocket expense. You can avoid this expense by having your child vaccinated at their primary care provider."

- C. If an immunization is being administered to a person younger than 18 years old, information on primary care providers in the pharmacy's geographic area should be provided.
- D. If the purpose of the visit is for a childhood immunization other than the influenza or COVID-19 vaccine, counseling on the importance of establishing and maintaining a relationship with a pediatric or family practice for ongoing medical and well-child care must be provided.

## **VII. Reporting of Adverse Events**

The following adverse events must be reported to the Vaccine Adverse Event Reporting System ("VAERS") (<https://vaers.hhs.gov/reportevent.html>):

- A. Any adverse event listed by the vaccine manufacturer as a contraindication to further doses of the vaccine; or
- B. any adverse event listed in the [VAERS Table of Reportable Events Following Vaccination](#) that occurs within the specified time period after vaccinations.

### **VIII. Vaccine Storage and Handling**

- A. All vaccines must be stored and handled in accordance with Policy 2020-05: [Proper Storage of Refrigerated and Frozen Medications](#).
- B. Drawing up vaccines for future use (i.e., greater than 1 hour) is considered sterile compounding and must be performed under sterile conditions in accordance with [USP <797>](#).

### **Resources:**

- Vaccine Information Statements (“VIS”) in English and other languages: [www.immunize.org/vis](http://www.immunize.org/vis)
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (“CDC”) website: [www.cdc.gov/vaccines](http://www.cdc.gov/vaccines)
- General Best Practice Guidelines for Immunization from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices: <https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/hcp/acip-recs/general-recs/index.html>
- MDPH Clinic Operation guidelines: <https://www.mass.gov/doc/guidelines-for-immunization-clinics/download>

### **Please direct any questions to:**

Board of Registration in Pharmacy: [Pharmacy.Admin@mass.gov](mailto:Pharmacy.Admin@mass.gov)

Vaccine Management Unit: 617-983-6828